

Localism in radio went out the window in the 80's due to excessive and overly aggressive de-regulation. The answer is simple: Make licensees accountable again! The current rules allow a station to maintain it's main studio "in or near it's community of license.." The rule is too vague. The main studio should be located within the legal limits of the city of license, not "near" the city of license. And it should be staffed during regular business hours in order for the public to have reasonable access. In addition, at least 1/3 of the weekly programming at a minimum should originate from the main studio. I realize that in order to remain efficient that some degree of consolidation may be necessary in some cases but I believe that it's been used as nothing more than an excuse to rake in bigger profits at the expense of localism in far too many instances. Many main studios today are located far from the actual city of license and the public has no idea where to go to actually contact those stations. Due to simulcast situations and other reasons, many local radio stations don't even maintain a listing in the local telephone book! In addition, the "ascertainment requirement" should be re-instated at renewal. Local broadcasters, in exchange for the right to use the public airwaves for profit, should be again required to do ascertainment needs surveys as was previously done. These surveys at license renewal would determine the problems, needs, and interests of the community of license. These needs could then be used as a guide by the Commission to determine if the incumbent licensee was serving those needs, obligations, and interests or if perhaps a competing applicant would be a better choice to award the license to at renewal time instead of the current method of simply rubber stamping the renewal as long as the regulatory fees are paid and there is no significant history of violations. The possibility that a licensee could actually be denied renewal and the license awarded to a competing application at renewal time based on the licensee's actual performance during the license period would have a dramatic effect on localism! The fact that a stations license is up for renewal should be advertised conspicuously in local newspapers and on the air with instructions pertaining to filing objections or competing applications and filing comments pertaining to a licensee's performance during the license period. The airwaves belong to the public. A licensee is simply a "trustee" of the frequency. Every right is governed by a coresponding responsibility. Since deregulation in the 1980's broadcasters have enjoyed a huge increase in "rights" but have not had to provide much in the way of additional responsibilities in exchange. The public and local communities are being grossly shortchanged.